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Page 22 has a list of the winner from our Cool Tunes contest.

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Saying goodbye is always hard to do. So long, see ya later or talk to you soon are much more non-terminal endings that people prefer to use. But as this is the last issue of *Toronto Computes!* a goodbye is in order.

Started in 1984, the first issue came out in November of that year. *Toronto Computes!* was a computer enthusiast magazine. It was run by fans of the burgeoning computer and was aimed at educating readers about the new phenomenon of personal computers.

The era of the personal computer really took off in 1984 – that was the year Apple released the revolutionary Macintosh using an extravagant commercial during that year's Superbowl. But that wasn't the only big announcement that year – Microsoft released DOS 3.0 and *Word 1.1*, Hewlett-Packard introduced the LaserJet laser printer with 300 dpi resolution, the online service Prodigy was started by Sears and IBM and Intel introduced the 80188 processor. Unlike the conclusions one can draw from George Orwell's 1984, the year was great and it held great promise for the future. Things were changing – and everybody knew it.

I was not into computers in 1984. I had a brief fling with the Commodore PET computers in highschool but the only thing I really learned, besides some rudimentary BASIC coding, was that I did not like programming computers. I discovered computers in 1986 when I became the editor of a small student newspaper. I worked on a Mac, printed the stories on a LaserJet and did manual paste-up – desktop publishing was not on my horizon yet. I had a specially purchased bag for the Mac that turned it into a "portable" computer – that was a very optimistic viewpoint and my back still hurts when I think about it.

It was 1986 when I discovered *Toronto Computes!* and I became a faithful reader of this publication and remain so to this day. In the early days it helped me solve some computer related problems, pointed me to users groups, gave me BBS listings so that I could log on and share tales of computer woe with others, check out what's new and upcoming in the computer world and gave me the latest prices on all sorts of computer systems and components. *Toronto Computes!* does the same today as it did nearly 20 years ago except that the industry has changed drastically.

When I got hired on to work at *Toronto Computes!* near the end of 1999 it was clear that everything was changing and quickly. It was the height of the Internet boom. We were given the mandate to expedite the change of *Toronto Computes!* from a magazine about technology to one that encompasses a technological lifestyle. In the four years since this has been done to a great extent. Today *Toronto Computes!* is more about the wonderful things you can do with your computer than the computer itself.

In this sense *HUB: Digital Living*, the magazine that will be replacing *Toronto Computes!*, is a logical extension of what we have been doing for the last several years. *HUB* will be a national magazine and will also be taking the place of our sister publication *The Computer Paper*.

So although this editorial is a goodbye from me and the rest of the staff at *Toronto Computes!* this is also an invitation to *HUB: Digital Living*. If you enjoyed what we have been doing for the past 19 years you will love the new focus and look of *HUB: Digital Living*.

Nestor Gula can be reached by e-mailing nestor@tcp.ca ◆

Reader Feedback

Musical Musings

As secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Independent Record Production Association (CIRPA), I've not only had the opportunity to read volumes of material regarding the demise of recorded music, but I'm also a student of the game. I agree with your Editorial comments TC! June and would add the following.

Apple has now taught a new generation how to download from the Internet. Apple's greatest hits for the first 3 weeks are U2, Sting and Cheryl Crow as the winners so it's not the kiddy down loaders who are forking out the $0.99. Now that we have taught these purchasers how to download, one wonders how long before they wander to other free sites and start stealing music?

A recent Nielsen's study of downloads seems to indicate that Rap and Urban music are not download victims and are actually flourishing at retail.

Another study indicates that Indy labels are not suffering to the same degree as the majors. Indy music is apt to be new and exciting, so I don't think that this is coincidence.

I was at A&M and Polygram (Canada) during the introduction and glory years of the CD. You're right on that catalogue fed the markets while new music suffered.

We need a new messiah. Elvis, the Beatles, Disco (ish), Rap – but these were generations (of buyers) that could afford and did pay for their music.

Basic economics (ie. supply vs. demand) underlines the fact that the record industry always had a greater supply than demand and has created demand through imaginative marketing. They've kept sight of their ability to supply, but (as you point out) failed to recognize that demand was shifting, not only in demographics but in the method of distribution.

The challenge is to recognize the new demand, reinvent the supply and service it with new marketing tools. Perhaps we are returning to a singles market in which case history does repeat itself.

Regards, keep up the good work.

Gary W. Hubbard, CGA
Manager - Music & Ancillary Revenues, Alliance Atlantis Entertainment Group

The Editor, Toronto Computes!
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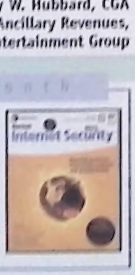
tcletters@tcp.ca

Letters on issues raised in the paper or general computer topics are welcome. Please be brief. We regret that we are unable to look up stories from past issues, suggest products, or solve all your computer problems. All correspondence must include your full name in addition to your e-mail or snail-mail address. Letters may be edited for space or content.

Screenshot of the Month

For his letter this month, Gary W. Hubbard wins a copy of Symantec's *Norton Internet Security 2003*. To keep your computer and data safe when accessing the Internet this software package includes: *Norton Antivirus, Norton Personal Firewall, Norton Privacy Control, Norton Spam Alert* and *Norton Parental Control*.



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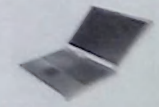

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Movies and music in your pocket

By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

Anyone that travels often by airplane has likely suffered through countless movies that are neither particularly interesting nor entertaining. With some exceptions, in-flight movies are almost as tedious as the ride itself. And we won't even talk about the in-flight music.

RCA (www.rca.com) recently released a product that could go a long way to keep travellers occupied with their own entertainment.

The Lyra RD2780 is a 20 GB audio/video jukebox capable of storing up to 80 hours of recorded shows, home movies, feature films or countless hours of music recorded in Windows Media format, MP3 or MP3PRO, a new format that approximately halves the size of an MP3 file. The RD2780 can also store up to 100,000 digital photos in JPEG format.

The device uses a USB 2.0 connection to the home computer and can play for up to 15 hours on its lithium ion battery, the company says.

All this and none of the pilot interruptions that always seem to come at a crucial point in the story.

New Treo flavour

First, there was the Palm OS organizer and cellular phone, then it went colour, and finally, the Treo from Handspring has done away with the flip up earpiece that was very prone to breaking even with normal use.

The Treo 600 series (unchanged, confusingly) will be the first Treo to be released since, in an ironic twist, Palm bought out a troubled Handspring, whose executive board was made up of former Palm employees who splintered from the company to become a competitor.

The Treo 600 will have a built in VGA (640x480) camera, a QWERTY thumb keyboard and will use Palm OS 5 running on an ARM 5 processor.

The first products in the Treo 600 line will start shipping in the fall, though pricing has yet to be revealed.

Add a camera to your handheld

As evidenced by numerous PDAs, cell phones and any number of other devices, working digital cameras into existing products is all the rage.

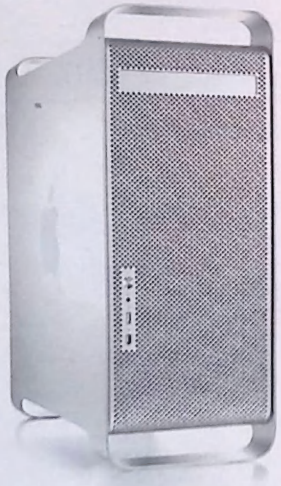
For those left out of the loop – having recently bought a new PDA sans camera – but who want to get in on the trend without shelling out for a new handheld, Animation Technologies Inc. may be able to help.

The FlyCam-SD is the world's first PDA SD camera, the company says. The 1.3 megapixel digital camera plugs in to the top of a PocketPC (Palm OS is not supported) and acts as well as a digital camcorder – though calling a 320x240, 30-frames-per-second video capture device a "digital camcorder" is stretching it.

The FlyCam-SD has a built-in optical viewfinder and flash and uses a .5-inch lens with a 54 degree viewing angle that can rotate through 210 degrees and captures images in BMP, JPG, or GIF format at 320x240, 640x480, or 1,280x1,024 resolution. However, with no power source on board, the camera module will eat through the PDA's batteries, especially if using the flash.

An Apple to drool over

While Apple may not make too many announcements compared with some other manufacturers, when they do speak out, the news is usually pretty big.



So it is with the company's latest announcement of its new Power Mac G5, which could have even the most devout PC users salivating.

The heart of the latest PowerPC is the new 64-bit G5 processor core that the company says incorporates 50 million transistors. The top of the line dual G5 machine operating with a 1 GHz front side bus has a pretty amazing 16 GB per second throughput.

In other words, blisteringly fast for 3D animation, 2D graphic manipulation, video and games – although much to some Apple owner's chagrin, few games make their way to the Mac platform. For full specs and details on Mac's new G5 line, visit www.apple.ca/powermac.

Online gaming without the mess

The mess associated with playing video games used to be empty pizza boxes, pop cans, beer bottles and the like. However, since going online, hardcore console gamers have had a wholly different mess to deal with, namely the metres of Ethernet cabling from the office where the Internet connection enters, to the entertainment centre.

A number of companies have released WiFi adapters aimed specifically at the console gaming market, most recently, Linksys (www.linksys.com) with its Wireless-B Gaming Adapter. The adapter uses the 802.11b standard to allow net-enabled consoles to access the Internet wirelessly for online gaming.

Linksys says the Wireless-B can also connect two consoles using existing system link capabilities in Xbox games like *Halo* and *Brute Force* and in Nintendo's recently announced *Mario Kart: Double Dash* by hooking the systems up to their own Wireless-B adapters and selecting the appropriate channel on the LED display.

While it doesn't so much get rid of the wires as it does make them shorter, it could help to tidy up some of the mess associated with online console gaming. Now if only we could do something about those pizza boxes and beer bottles. ◆

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AMD Athlon XP-2500+	$774.99 or $29/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2800+	$909.99 or $34/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3000+	$1014.99 or $37/mth
Intel Celeron-1.7GHz	$719.99 or $27/mth
Intel Celeron-2.0GHz	$734.99 or $27/mth
Intel Celeron-2.2GHz	$739.99 or $27/mth
Intel Celeron-2.3GHz	$749.99 or $28/mth
Intel Celeron-2.4GHz	$764.99 or $28/mth
Intel Celeron-2.6GHz	$789.99 or $29/mth
Intel Pentium 4-1.8GHz	$814.99 or $30/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4B-512k	$864.99 or $32/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6B-512k	$904.99 or $33/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.8B-512k	$994.99 or $37/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.0B-512k	$1154.99 or $42/mth

PREMIER CHOICE SILVER

- Abit KD7 Motherboard for AMD Socket A or Abit IS7-E Motherboard for Intel Pentium 4 CPUs
- Thermaltake Volcano 6CU+ Heat Sink/Fan for AMD CPU
- Panasonic 3.5" - 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive
- 60Gb Fast ATA-100 Hard Disk Drive @ 7200RPM
- 256Mb DDR RAM, PC2700, 184Pin RAM Memory
- Premium 6 Bay Mid-Tower ATX Case w/ HEC 300W P.S.
- 4- USB Ports, 2- 16550 Serial Ports, 1 PS/2 Mouse Port & 1- Bi-Directional Parallel Port
- Sapphire Radeon 9200 AGP Video w/ 64Mb & TV-Out
- Sony DVD/CD-RW Combo Drive (48/24/48/16)
- On-board PCI Stereo Sound w/ Surround Sound
- Altec Lansing AVS500 w/ 4 Speakers & Subwoofer
- Rockwell 56K Int. Voice/Fax/Modem v.90 (PCI)
- On-Board 10/100 PCI Full Duplex Network Adapter
- Samsung 753DF 17" Digital .20hdp CRT Monitor, Flat
- Mitsumi 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Win 95 Keyboard
- Logitech Optical Mouse w/ Wheel w/ Mouse Pad
- MS Windows XP Home OEM w/ CD and Manual
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Athlon XP-2000+	$1074.99 or $40/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2400+	$1114.99 or $41/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2500+	$1119.99 or $41/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2800+	$1254.99 or $46/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3000+	$1359.99 or $50/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3200+	$1639.99 or $55/mth
Intel Celeron-2.0GHz	$1094.99 or $40/mth
Intel Celeron-2.2GHz	$1099.99 or $40/mth
Intel Celeron-2.4GHz	$1124.99 or $41/mth
Intel Celeron-2.6GHz	$1149.99 or $42/mth
Intel Pentium 4-1.8GHz	$1174.99 or $43/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4B- 512k	$1224.99 or $45/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4C- 512k	$1239.99 or $46/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6B- 512k	$1264.99 or $46/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6C- 512k	$1294.99 or $48/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.8C- 512k	$1369.99 or $50/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.0C- 512k	$1554.99 or $52/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.2C- 512k	$1914.99 or $64/mth

PREMIER CHOICE GOLD

- Abit P4S800 Motherboard for Intel Pentium 4 CPUs or Asus A7V8X-X Motherboard for AMD CPUs
- Thermaltake Volcano 9 Heat Sink/Fan for AMD CPUs
- Panasonic 3.5" - 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive
- 80Gb ATA-100 Hard Disk Drive @ 7200RPM w/ 8Mb
- 512Mb DDR RAM, PC2700, 184 Pin RAM Memory
- Enlight Mid-Tower ATX Case w/ 7 Bays & 2 Front USB
- Enlight True 380W ATX Power Supply
- 4- USB 1.1 Ports, 2- USB 2.0 Ports, 2- Serial Ports & 1- Bi-Directional Parallel Port
- Asus v9520/TD GeForceFX 5200 w/ 128Mb
- Sony 52x24x52 CD-RW Drive w/ Burn Software
- Sony 16X DVD-ROM Drive w/ 40X CDROM support
- SoundBlaster Live 5.1 PCI Stereo Soundcard
- Creative Inspire 4.1-4400 Speaker System w/ Sub
- On-Board 10/100 PCI Full Duplex Network Adapter
- Samsung 950B 19" Digital .22hdp CRT Monitor
- Keytronic 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Win 95 Keyboard
- Microsoft Wheel Mouse Optical Mouse w/ Mouse Pad
- MS Windows XP Home OEM w/ CD and Manual
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Athlon XP-2000+	$1319.99 or $48/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2200+	$1344.99 or $49/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2400+	$1359.99 or $50/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2500+	$1364.99 or $50/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2800+	$1499.99 or $55/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3000+	$1604.99 or $54/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3200+	$1884.99 or $63/mth
Intel Celeron-2.2GHz	$1339.99 or $49/mth
Intel Celeron-2.4GHz	$1364.99 or $50/mth
Intel Celeron-2.6GHz	$1389.99 or $51/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4B- 512k	$1464.99 or $54/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4C- 512k	$1479.99 or $54/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6B- 512k	$1504.99 or $50/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6C- 512k	$1534.99 or $51/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.8C- 512k	$1609.99 or $54/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.0C- 512k	$1794.99 or $60/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.2C- 512k	$2154.99 or $72/mth

PREMIER CHOICE BLACK

- Asus P4C800/Dlx Motherboard for Intel Pentium 4 CPUs or Asus A7N8X-DX Motherboard for AMD CPUs
- Thermaltake Volcano 7+ Heat Sink /Fan
- Panasonic 3.5" - 1.44MB Black Floppy Disk Drive
- 80Gb SATA/150 Hard Disk Drive @ 7200RPM w/ 8Mb
- 512Mb DDR RAM, PC3200, 184 Pin RAM Memory
- Nest Mid-Tower ATX Case w/ Window and Neon Lights
- Enlight True 420W ATX Power Supply w/ 2 Fans
- On-Board SATA Raid Controller & Ultra/133 Support
- 6- USB Ports and 2- 1394 Firewire Ports
- Sapphire Radeon 9800 w/ 128Mb & DVI, TV-Out
- Sony 52x24x52 Black CD-RW Drive w/ Burn Software
- Sony 16X Black DVD-ROM Drive w/ 40X CDROM
- Realtek ALC650 Audio w/ 6 Channel Support
- Creative Inspire 6.1 6600 w/ 6 Speakers & Subwoofer
- US Robotics 56K Internal Fax/Modem v.90
- RJ-45 Ports for High Speed Network Access
- Samsung 963DF Black 19" Digital .20hdp CRT Monitor
- Keytronic KT800 104 Black Soft-Touch Keyboard
- Keytronic Black Mouse w/ Scroll Wheel
- Antec 80mm Second Case fan w/ Colored LEDs
- Arctic Silver III Thermal Heat Compound
- MS Windows XP Home OEM w/ CD and Manual
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Athlon XP-2000+	$1884.99 or $63/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2200+	$1919.99 or $64/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2400+	$1934.99 or $65/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2500+	$1939.99 or $65/mth
AMD Athlon XP-2800+	$2074.99 or $69/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3000+	$2179.99 or $73/mth
AMD Athlon XP-3200+	$2459.99 or $82/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4B- 512k	$2119.99 or $71/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.4C- 512k	$2134.99 or $71/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6B- 512k	$2159.99 or $72/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.6C- 512k	$2189.99 or $73/mth
Intel Pentium 4-2.8C- 512k	$2264.99 or $75/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.0C- 512k	$2449.99 or $82/mth
Intel Pentium 4-3.2C- 512k	$2809.99 or $94/mth

Due to fluctuating memory and CPU pricing, check our web site for up-to-date pricing.

Premier CPUs & Memory

AMD Duron 1.3-Ghz @ 100/200Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2000+ @ 266Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2200+ @ 266Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2400+ @ 266Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2600+ @ 333Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2700+ @ 333Mhz (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2500+ @ 333Mhz Barton (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 2800+ @ 333Mhz Barton (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 3000+ @ 333Mhz Barton (Socket A)	see web
AMD Athlon XP 3200+ @ 400Mhz Barton (Socket A)	see web
Intel Celeron 1.7-GHz (Socket 478) @ 400Mhz	see web
Intel Celeron 2.0-GHz (Socket 478) @ 400Mhz	see web
Intel Celeron 2.2-GHz (Socket 478) @ 400Mhz	see web
Intel Celeron 2.4-GHz (Socket 478) @ 400Mhz	see web
Intel Celeron 2.6-GHz (Socket 478) @ 400Mhz	see web
Intel Pentium 4-1.8-GHz (Socket 478)	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.4 GHz @ 533 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.4-GHz @ 800 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.6-GHz @ 533 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.6-GHz @ 800 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.8-GHz @ 533 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-2.8-GHz @ 800 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-3.0-GHz @ 533 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-3.0-GHz @ 800 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web
Intel Pentium 4-3.2-GHz @ 800 Mhz (S478) 512k	see web

Full List of CPUs Available Online

128 MB, SDRAM PC/133Mhz	see web
256 MB, SDRAM PC/133Mhz	see web
512 MB, SDRAM PC/133Mhz	see web
256 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC2700 (333Mhz)	see web
512 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC2700 (333Mhz)	see web
1 GB, DDRAM SDRAM PC2700 (333Mhz)	see web
256 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3200 (400Mhz)	see web
512 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3200 (400Mhz)	see web
OCZ 256 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC2700	see web
OCZ 256 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3200	see web
OCZ 256 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3500 EL	see web
OCZ 2x 256 MB, DDRAM PC3500 Dual Channel EL	see web
OCZ 512 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC2700	see web
OCZ 512 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3200	see web
OCZ 512 MB, DDRAM SDRAM PC3500 EL	see web
OCZ 2x 512 MB, DDRAM PC3500 Dual Channel	see web
128 MB Rambus, 184Pin PC800/1000 Non ECC	see web/see web
256 MB Rambus, 184Pin PC800/1000 Non ECC	see web/see web
512 MB Rambus, 184Pin PC800/1000 Non ECC	see web/see web

Flash, USB and Notebook Memory Available Online

Premier Cooling & Accessories

Thermaltake Volcano 6 CU / CU+ ... Thermaltake Volcano 7+ w/ Variable 80mm fan ... Thermaltake Volcano 9 / 9 Cool Mod ... Thermaltake Aquarius II - Liquid Cooling Kit ... [illegible]

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Motherboards for AMD CPUs

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Abit KD7, Socket A, VIA KT400 (ATX) wo/w RAID	$114.99/$129.99
Asus A7V8X-X, Socket A, KT400 (ATX)	$94.99
Asus A7V600, Socket A, KT600 (ATX)	$129.99
Asus A7N8X-Dlx, Socket A, nForce2 (ATX) Serial ATA	$104.99
Asus A7N8X-X, Socket A, nForce2 (ATX)	$119.99
ECS K7S5A/Pro, Socket A, SiS 745 Chipset w/ Lan & Sound	$89.99
ECS L7VMM2, Socket A (MATX) w/ Video, Sound & Lan	$79.99

Motherboards for Intel CPUs

Abit BE7-RAID, Socket 478, Intel 845PE (ATX)	$149.99
Abit IS7-E, Socket 478, Intel 865PE (ATX) SATA	$134.99
Abit IS7, Socket 478, Intel 865PE (ATX) SATA RAID	$154.99
Abit IC7, Socket 478, Intel 875PE (ATX) SATA RAID	$189.99
Abit IC7-G, Socket 478, Intel 875PE (ATX) SATA RAID	$204.99
Asus P4C800-Dlx, Socket 478, Intel 875P Chipset (ATX)	$204.99
Asus P4C800-E Dlx, Socket 478, Intel 875P Chipset (ATX)	$264.99
Asus P4P800, Socket 478, Intel 865PE Chipset (ATX)	$174.99
Asus P4P800-Dlx, Socket 478, Intel 865PE Chipset (ATX)	$199.99
Asus P4S800, Socket 478, SiS 648FX Chipset (ATX)	$119.99
Asus P4XP-X, Socket 478, Intel 845D Chipset (ATX)	$89.99
ECS P4VMM2-5.0, Socket 478, Via Chipset w/ Lan & Sound	$74.99
ECS P4S5A/DX+, Socket 478, SiS 645 Chipset w/ Lan & Sound	$79.99
ECS P6S1MT, Socket 370 (MATX) w/ Video, Sound & Lan	$79.99
Tyan S1854, FC-PGA & Slot 1, Via 133 Chipset (ATX)	$134.99

Full List of Motherboards available on our Website

Premier Hard Drives & Storage

40GB ATA/100 7200RPM EIDE Hard Drive ... $59.99; 80GB ATA/100 7200RPM EIDE Hard Drive ... $114.99; 120GB ATA/100 7200RPM EIDE Hard Drive ... $144.99; [illegible]

Serial ATA Drives - More to come.

[illegible]

Full List of Hard Drive Brands Available Online

[illegible]

Premier Video Cards

Asus v9180/Magic GeForce 4 MX440 64Mb DDR TV-Out	$79.99
Asus v9520/TD GeForce FX FX5200 128Mb DDR TV-Out	$129.99
Asus v9520/VS GeForce FX FX5200 128Mb DDR Video In/Out	$134.99
Asus v9560/TD GeForce FX FX5600 128Mb DDR TV-Out	$249.99
Asus v9560/VS GeForce FX FX5600 128Mb DDR Video In/Out	$264.99
Asus v9950 GeForce FX FX5900 128Mb DDR TV-Out	$304.99
Asus v9950/Ultra GeForce FX FX5900Ultra 256Mb DDR TV-Out	$724.99
ATI Radeon 9600Pro w/ 128Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$249.99
ATI Radeon 9800Pro w/ 128Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$529.99
ATI All-In-Wonder Radeon 7500 w/ 64Mb AGP DDR	$109.99
ATI All-In-Wonder Radeon 9000Pro w/ 64Mb AGP DDR	$244.99
ATI All-In-Wonder Radeon 9800Pro w/ 128Mb AGP DDR	$574.99
Leadtek A310TDV12 GeForce FX FX5600 256Mb DDR VIVO	$244.99
Leadtek A310Ultra GeForce FX FX5600Ultra 128Mb DDR VIVO	$294.99
Leadtek A350 GeForce FX FX5900 128Mb DDR VIVO	$314.99
Matrox Millennium P650 Dh/DVI w/ 64Mb	$244.99
Sapphire Xpert 2000 Pro w/ 32Mb SDRAM AGP	$34.99
Sapphire Radeon 7000 w/ 64Mb SDRAM AGP w/ Video Out	$49.99
Sapphire Radeon 9200 w/ 64Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$94.99
Sapphire Radeon 9200 w/ 128Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$109.99
Sapphire Radeon 9600 w/ 128Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$189.99
Sapphire Radeon 9800 w/ 128Mb DDR AGP w/ Video Out	$264.99
Sapphire Radeon 9800Pro AGP w/ Video Out w/ 128Mb	$409.99
Sapphire Radeon 9800Pro AGP w/ Video Out w/ 256Mb	$444.99

Full List of Video Cards Available Online

Leadtek WinFast TV 2000 XP - TV & FM Tuner ... $79.99

Premier Networks

D-Link 10/100Mbit Ethernet Card; SMC 10/100Mbit Ethernet Card; 3COM 10/100Mbit Ethernet Card w/ Wake on Lan; Linksys 10/100 Ethernet USB Adapter; [illegible]

Cables, Ends and Adapters are also available

[illegible]

Premier Soundcards & Speakers

[illegible]

Premier CD/DVD-ROM & RW Drives

Sony 52X CD-ROM Drives; Pioneer / Sony / Toshiba 16X DVD-ROM Drives (Beige); Pioneer / Sony 16X DVD-ROM Drive (Black)

Full List of Drives Available Online

Plextor Plexwriter Premium (52x/32x/52x) (Beige); Plextor Plexwriter Premium (52x/32x/52x) (Black); Sony CD-Re-Writer w/ Burn-Proof (Black); Sony CD-Re-Writer w/ Burn-Proof (Beige); Sony DVD/CD-RW Combo Drive (Beige); Pioneer DVR-A05 (DVD-RW & CD/RW); Sony DRU-510A (DVD+-RW & CD/RW) (Beige or Black) [prices illegible]

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Online stores borrow old retail tricks

By SUE BOWNESS

Thank goodness for online shopping. No more sales or whimsical last-minute purchases – just sit down, stick to your shopping list, get what you need and go. Well, if you think you're really off the hook and you'll never make an impulse buy again, take a closer look. It may be a new media but a closer look reveals some old tricks. From front door to final sale, online stores like Grocery Gateway (www.grocerygateway.com), Amazon (www.amazon.com) and Chapters (www.chapters.indigo.ca) are featuring many of the old-school storefront obstacles as their bricks-and-mortar counterparts. They may not be able to manage the in-store taste test, but they get pretty close with most other consumer shopping weaknesses. Let's take a walk through, and see.

At the front door is where you first notice the hard sell: the weekly specials, the special holiday and seasonal merchandise. At Chapters, a sign to pre-order the new Harry Potter book has been front and centre for months, and Mother's Day provided a perfect occasion to launch its new jewellery section, where you can now buy pendants and bracelets online. Amazon chose to employ that important entranceway in highlighting its exclusive tenure on the new Segway Human Transporter (only two per customer, and only US$4,950). Even when there is not a season to peg, topics are flagged, like babies or leisure. What parent is not going to feel a twinge of guilt buying things for themselves while leaving their baby out of their Amazon order, especially when it's so easy to access? Amazon appropriately lists these random topics in a box called Browse.

Grocery Gateway is master of the authentic store layout, with the entire site arranged in aisles as if you're walking through a real life store. At the top level, it's like walking through a mall containing all sorts of specialty shops, with tabs like grocery, fresh market, organic and natural, and drugstore. Click down a level into a section like Grocery and find yourself with an alphabetized list of categories like cereals and breakfasts, condiments, cooking and baking, frozen foods, frozen desserts, and the list goes on. On the front page of every category you'll find the Internet equivalent of the end-aisle display, with a featured product that is usually on special. It's like the only thing missing is the taste test, and even then it's only the taste that's missing, not the testimonial. "Step out of the Juice Box! Try something different today," it says at the front of the Cold Beverages aisle. Now that's product placement.

Next stop: The bargain basement. If you thought the days of the super sales would disappear once shopping moved online, take a look at the 80 per cent off tab at Chapters. Or the weekly specials aisle at Grocery Gateway. Amazon offers a gold club for repeat customers, where making a purchase entitles you to access exclusive special offers. Even coupons are making the transition to online, either arriving via e-mail or being handed out in paper format from the stores with promises of free delivery or dollars off on a first purchase. My personal favourite has got to be Amazon's bottom of the page deals, though you can almost feel yourself on the escalator descending to the bargain basement as you scroll down, waaay down, to the bottom of the page.

New and improved

While those elements are merely transferred from life to online, some traditional mechanisms of shopping are enhanced so that they're much better in the digital world than they were on the floor. Take the shopping list, and the store where that list is handiest, Grocery Gateway. Not only can you construct your own grocery list and save it for future shopping trips, but you can browse through prefabricated lists of frequently used items, or even have a list built for you based on a recipe in the recipe section. As a first time user will discover, going through every aisle of Grocery Gateway is a time consuming process, even slower than live shopping. So it is on repeat visits that these lists come in handy, when you can instantly fill your cart with all your regular items with one click. On Amazon, where some of the items are admittedly more wanted than needed, you can construct a wish list of items to keep in mind for the future, such as the Segway (hey, it's a wish list, not a realism list). On Amazon and Chapters, book reviews, product reviews and people-who-bought-also-bought lists are by now standard fare, and Chapters now features new In the Media and Hot Topics recommendations on the front page that connect you with resources on what everybody's talking about.

Finally the cash register, where final temptations traditionally await the tired shopper. You'll notice these temptations are mostly geared towards adults, since most moms aren't going to be online with their kids. Unfortunately, the grab-by-kids-eager-for-checkout-side-skipping-ropes-and-bubble-gum demographic is one that online grocery stores may actually have lost. And yet there's plenty for the adult. Though you may not have to stand in line as long, the usual goodies are still there to tempt you. Grocery Gateway offers standard impulse buys: chocolate, discounted items, and women's magazines.

At the outset, the thought of online marketers borrowing the same stale techniques from their concrete counterparts might have seemed slightly offensive. Yet perhaps you might also feel a certain sense of ... nostalgia? Maybe it is the tug at our sense of familiarity in seeing supermarket aisles, or that we secretly enjoy the old checkout struggle over buying that magazine, either you feel virtuous for resisting that trash they keep at the checkouts or, on your weaker visits, anxious to get home and read that magazine you grabbed, make that clicked on, on your way out. Certainly they serve to put the emotional element back into shopping – the thrill of the bargain, the wistfulness of the wish list, the luxury of the browse. And all without the heft of the shopping bag. ◆

Toronto computes! AUGUST PHOTO SPREE WINNER

THE WINNER:

Congratulations to Brad Snow whose picture won our seventh bi-monthly Photo Spree challenge, Street Scenes. Brad used a Toshiba PDR-M71 camera to capture the image. He tweaked the hue on the image in Photoshop. For his image Brad Snow won a Lexmark P707 Photo Jet Printer.

LEXMARK

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The new Photo Spree Assignment will appear in the debut issue of HUB: Digital Living.

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ASUS P4S533-X	$79.9
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ASUS A7N 8X-X-UAY	$110.9
EPOX 8RDA+	$158.9
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Gigabyte GA-8PE800	$97.9
Gigabyte GA-7VAXP	$120.9

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LinkSys Wireless G Router	$166.9
LinkSys 4-Port Router	$67.9
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120G Western Dig. 7200 8M	$153.9
200G Western Dig. JB 7200	$281.9
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80G Seagate 7200 ATA-100	$105.9

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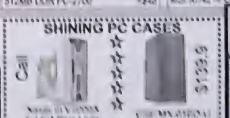

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FEATURE

Palm life: Shopping made handy

By NESTOR GULA

One of the first things I've used my Palm for is to make a shopping list. Since I have my Palm with me most of the time, I am able to jot down items that we've run out of or things that I think would enhance my home.

Initially I tried using the memo pad – Palm's little built-in application that saves handwritten notes. This is a great feature but my handwriting leaves a lot to be desired – including clarity. I then switched to the built-in notepad feature of the Palm. This is a small word processor, similar to Notepad in Windows or SimpleText in Macintosh. I thought it was working fine. My wife thought otherwise.

Before going on a shopping jaunt we would discuss the needs of our household. She would fire off a list of things we needed that were not on my list. Unfortunately, although I am comfortable with Graffiti, the Palm way of entering data, I am not that quick. While I would still be jotting down the first item, she would be on the fourth or fifth item of her list. It got worse at the supermarket. There I'd be, standing in the middle of the aisle consulting my Palm, oblivious to the other shoppers around me. The Notepad is not the ideal way to manage a shopping list because it is not easy to scratch items off the list.

A solution came rather unexpectedly. I was peering into my Palm in the aisle of my local No Frills, when another customer caught my eye. He too was consulting a Palm. We exchanged greetings and started chatting. He showed me a special program that managed his shopping list. *HandyShopper* seemed really good and he offered to beam it to me (via the wireless infrared function that's built into every Palm). Up to that time I had never beamed or been beamed so I politely declined.

I downloaded *HandyShopper* from the PalmGear site (*www.palmgear.com*). This is more than a simple list manager – it is a full-fledged product database. The way you set it up is by taking a few old shopping receipts and entering the product name and price. You can have the same item show up listed in different stores with different prices – so this is a very good comparison shopping tool as well. If you need an item you simply check it and it goes from the All list to the Need list. If there are items not on your list you can enter them with an estimated price or no price. It is easy to update the list with current prices in the store – although I am not fanatical enough to wander through the store entering all the products into *HandyShopper*. Once you have all the items that you need checked, you can get a total price for the purchase by hitting the button with a dollar sign. This is very cool, although the price will vary occasionally because of fluctuations in the prices of fruit and vegetables. You can also vary the quantity of what you need to buy from one to 999,999.

HandyShopper really works well and has simplified my shopping list conundrum. I'm still peering into my Palm while shuffling through the supermarket's aisles, but I'm not taking up too much space and am not bothering anyone.

And now for something completely different.

I was walking down the street one sunny day and pulled my Palm out to jot down some ideas that just happened to pop into my head. I was astonished to notice that I could not make hide nor hair of the Palm screen. I began fiddling with the settings but this was to no avail. I could barely read what was on my screen. The Palm m130 that I am using has a colour screen and I thought this might have something to do with it. I ducked indoors and the device seemed to be alright. Stepping out into the street I was relieved to see that the Palm was back to working normally.

Analyzing my actions in those frantic five minutes I realized that it was not a problem with my Palm but with the clip-on sunglasses I wear. It seems that the Polarized UV protection that is present in my glasses to shield my eyes from harmful sun rays also effectively blocks out my Palm's screen. The good news is that those same clip-on glasses have effective UV protection. Next time I buy sunglasses I'll take my Palm along to test the glasses – but I digress. The only downside is that I will have to take off my sunglasses every time I check my Palm while on the summer streets. ◆

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Digital Shots: Creating a photo essay

By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

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Choose your focus

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The focus can be anything the photographer feels will give the pictures some interest beyond just the event they document. For example, in the case of a birthday party for a young child, the focus should be something beyond just the event itself. Instead of just taking simple snapshots throughout, think about what you want viewers to see in the photographs and shoot accordingly.

One approach might be to pay particular attention to interactions between everyone at the party. This specific approach would require the photographer to be as unobtrusive as possible to get candid reactions between all of the kids and adults in attendance.

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Find the common elements

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CREATIVETECH

Adventures in digital video

Light up – It's (almost) free and easy

By LEE RICKWOOD

Even the best camcorders can make video images that are grainy or murky. Most likely, there's not enough light on the subject.

In previous columns, we've learned about adding light wherever possible. You can buy studio lamps and battery-driven portable lights, on-camera luminaries, and smaller hotshoe mounted mini-lights.

But the professional kits can cost thousands of dollars. Variable-height (extending up to 122 cm, usually) stand-mounted work lights are incredibly cheap and very powerful. Dual, 1,000-watt models are usually less than $50. Fixed-height floor models are around $30. Both types should have rotating lamp heads for easy use; look for lamps to rotate 360 degrees and tilt up to 180 degrees forward and back with adjustment knobs that hold firm.

Some hardware stores stock dual-head work lamps with extra long power cables, too, which are very handy – and even more so when the two lamp heads are for different wattage lamps (250 and 500 W, for example).

You'll probably want to remove the protective metal cage on whatever work lamp you get, as it will cast a weird, grid-like shadow (but sometimes patterns of lights and shadow are very effective; see below for more).

If 1,000 W output is too much for your needs, there are 300 and 100 W replacement bulbs, for usually less than $10 each.

Some lamps will specify the colour temperature output, which is important for videographers. Luckily, most tungsten and quartz halogens are 3,200 kelvins (K).

If you don't have a camera with preset or degree-measured white balance, "incandescent" white balance is a workable option. If you leave your camera on auto white, the image colour might be off, or may even "float" a bit in mixed light environments (daylight is around 5,600 K; white fluorescent tube lights are usually 4,000 K).

Before you leave the hardware store, get some control over your new lights.

Whether you're using 1,000 W work lights or the bright noonday sun, you'll want to control the light – steer it one way or the other, soften it, diffuse or colourize it.

Sheets of plain foam core or any large white cardboard are a great way to reflect light into your scene. They easily diffuse or soften harsh, direct light. Shine your work light onto the foam core or set it up to reflect the sunlight and then angle the reflected light onto your subject; it creates a nice soft lighting effect.

Aluminum foil, white or clear shower curtains, even car window reflectors can be used to achieve similar results. Crumple up the tin foil for really bouncy, diffused light, or use it flat and smooth. Use the shower curtain to soften light shining through it (or suspend it behind your on-camera subject to throw the background way out of focus). If you can find car window reflectors with different colours on either side, you have doubled your lighting kit's creative potential very cheaply.

Clothespins, twist-ties, string and the like can be used to affix your bounce board to a stand, a tree – almost anything will work in a pinch.

Speaking of stands, buy some big plastic buckets, concrete mix and metal piping. For ten bucks or so, you can make a light stand that even the heaviest lamp or windiest day won't upset.

Before you leave the store, grab a little craft knife or similar cutting tool. You'll want to shape and size your light-bouncing material, of course, but you also might want to cut some holes in it.

You can buy a pre-fabricated gobo or cookie cutter or make one. Either way, shining light – especially coloured light – through holes and patterns cut into a sheet of cardboard can add wonderful texture and depth to your video scene.

Try cutting some unevenly shaped and sized holes in a large sheet of cardboard. Cover them with different coloured gels, taped on. Shine a work lamp through the holes, and onto the wall directly behind your subject (and hit the subject's face with a little pure white light) – it looks great on-camera.

Whatever camcorder you use, you can get better results anywhere you shoot by shedding a little light on the subject. So be adventurous, and light up. ◆

Big HDTV

By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

Moving up from a standard CRT television to any HDTV is a pretty amazing experience.

However, there are a few control niggles that require users to (gasp) read the manual; as with most all technology, as things get more advanced, there's a lot more reading to do to understand it.

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The Panasonic PT-45LC12 is a projection HDTV. We tried it out with an Xbox and a copy of Sega's *Baseball 2K3*. Much to our chagrin, there wasn't time for a marathon movie session. Hooking up the Xbox to the PT-45 required a special HDTV adapter, which is a $45 accessory. As all newly released Xbox games support HDTV, the game came to life on the larger-than-life screen.

The PT-45 supports 480p, 720p and 1080i, the three most common HDTV display formats. To display DTV programming, a set-top receiver is required.

The screen measures 45 inches diagonally, and for those with a lot of video or audio equipment to hook up, there are 3 A/V and 3 S-Video inputs, two each on the back and one each under a flip cover on the front.

The front control panel of the PT-45 is uncluttered, with only a power button and a navigational d-pad that also takes care of channels and volume. All of the other controls are hidden behind a small click out panel that looks like part of the right speaker grille.

While the two speakers are adequate, they can't give the effect to movies and games that a 5.1 speaker system offers. Anyone willing to shell out $6,499.99 for a television likely wouldn't feel that buying a set of 5.1 speakers is painful. ◆

AMD Athlon XP

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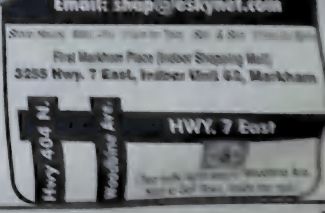

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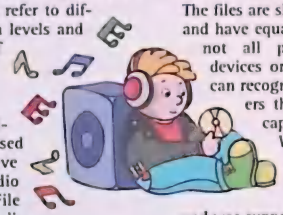
Musical Odyssey: Digital audio formats

By NESTOR GULA

When the music industry made the switch from vinyl to compact disc as a method of delivering recorded music, they started the mess that they are in now.

Compact disc technology was initially developed by Philips with contributions from Sony towards the end of the development cycle. By digitizing music, the industry inadvertently made it much easier to copy music. The laborious and often imperfect job of taping records was now just a few clicks away. Although the technology to digitally copy and transfer music files developed much later than the audio CD, it is very prevalent now.

If you are recording music at home, you are frequently confronted with different audio formats. Most audio formats on a PC just refer to different compression levels and various levels of audio quality.



Wave and AIFF

These are basically uncompressed audio formats. Wave and AIFF (Audio Interchange File Format) are simple linear audio that is played at a sampling rate of 44.1 kHz and 16-bits. Because these files do not have any data compression they are large – about 10 MB per minute. These files can be read by your computer, but more importantly they can be read by a standard CD player. If you want to burn an audio CD to play on a regular CD player, you must format your songs to one of these formats. There is another format, SD2, but this is rarely encountered by someone recording at home. Wave and AIFF files can also be stored on a CD as a data file.

Mighty MP3

This is the file format that revolutionized the music world. With average compression capabilities and not bad audio quality, the MP3 format has emerged in the last few years as the most popular music compression file type. Its flexibility and general acceptance means that it will be with us for many years to come. Witness the prevalence of MP3 players and portable, home and car stereos that now have MP3 playback capability. The size of an MP3 file is generally about 1 MB per minute. This rate can vary because MP3s can be made at various rates. The standard is 128 kbps at 44.1 kHz. Lower settings decrease the file size and degrade audio quality while higher settings have the opposite effect. MP3 compression works on a lossy system that permanently eliminates information deemed unnecessary. If you create an MP3 from a Wave file and then convert it back, it will not restore the audio quality. Some CD burning software automatically converts MP3 files to Wave files when you burn a CD, yielding an audio CD. CDs with just MP3 files have to be burned as data CDs.

Windows Media Format

WMA, the acronym for Windows Media Audio format, is Microsoft's answer to the MP3 compression format. The files are slightly smaller than MP3s and have equal audio quality. However not all players, whether audio devices or players on a computer, can recognize WMA files. The players that have WMA playback capabilities also play MP3s. When the Windows Media Audio format came out it had a system of copyright protection built in and was supposed to fix the problem of the free exchange of MP3 files. This system was unwieldy though and is generally ignored.

Real Audio

This is an audio-streaming format. The complete file is not downloaded on a computer. The only thing that is on your computer, when you listen to a real audio file, is a pointer file that directs the real audio player to the location of the file. The quality of the sound is similar to MP3 but the advantage for the distributor is that the files cannot be copied and shared. The disadvantage is that you have to be at your computer and online to listen to the music. As well, the player tends to be a bit bulky and uses a lot of the computer's resources.

There are lots of other compression formats around, such as MP3Pro, Monkey's Audio, Ogg Vorbis, and AAC (Advanced Audio Coding), but they suffer from incompatibilities and low acceptance rates. Most good music management software will handle most if not all of these formats with aplomb, even if your own recording software does not have the filters built in.

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Look, listen, create with *iLife*

By DWAYNE R. BROWN

Integration is something that sets Apple apart from the crowd. With *iLife*, your music files from *iTunes* are available in *iPhoto* for slide shows and *iMovie* for background music. Your pictures in *iPhoto* are available in *iMovie* for stills and new effects. *iMovie* now has a natural transition to *iDVD*. And I don't mean that it's easy to drag and drop from program to program. I mean that the files you're looking for are available right there in your application, without having to point to a file location. Once again, it's called integration.

iTunes remains relatively unchanged. Apple has added a new feature called Smart Playlists – in a simple setup, you just type the name of an artist in the window and you instantly have a playlist with all the songs from that artist. Another useful tool is the volume optimizer. It automatically adjusts playback level so that all songs are consistent. This should save a few speakers.

iPhoto has greatly improved for the benefit of the amateur photographer. Apple has included two new touch-up tools. Enhance is a one-click solution that analyzes a picture, corrects for poor white balance and brightens up the colours. Retouch is a tool similar to Heal in *Photoshop*. It allows you to fix minor blemishes on your picture. As Apple demonstrated, you can even remove a strand of stray hair from a face. Add these two tools to the pre-existing red-eye reduction and you can reach a quality that was previously only available in a more expensive program like *Photoshop*.

Saving albums has also undergone a bit of enhancement. You can burn an album or slide show directly to CD or DVD and maintain the arrangement of your album when you place the disc back in your computer. It's just like it was when it was in your *iPhoto* folder. Or you can burn a slide show complete with music from *iTunes* right to a DVD and watch it on your TV.

The biggest change you'll notice with *iMovie* is that it now has its own resizable window. It's a small thing, but it makes a big difference in the way you work and organize your screen. There are a more than a few new special effects and they generally aren't cheesy either. A really nice addition is the Ken Burns effect. It allows you to take still pictures from *iPhoto* and add motion to them in your *iMovie* project by panning and zooming around the still, based on starting and ending points that you enter. This effect works extremely well with documentaries when film footage is not available.

Audio has also been given a boost in *iMovie 3*. Apple has included 28 new sound effects from Skywalker studios (that's right, the same people who created *Star Wars*) and now allows to you to individually adjust the volume for each of the three audio tracks anywhere along the timeline.

Finally there's *iDVD*. Well, all that really needs to be said is, Chapters. When you are editing your movie in *iMovie*, you can now add chapter indexes so that you can navigate through your DVD. Add this to dozens of new professional looking themes and the ability to add any *iTunes* file or *iPhoto* album and you have the tools to produce a top quality DVD right in your own home.

Call it what you will – integration, convergence, or natural progression – everyone knows that computers are becoming the digital hub for home entertainment. While most computer potential is lost on the general public, *iLife* not only gives Mac users a glance at the future, it lets them taste a bit of it right now. ◆

more INFO

iLife
$75 (*iTunes*, *iPhoto*, *iMovie* available as free download from Web site)
Apple
www.apple.ca

Requirements:
PowerPC G3 or G4; Mac OS X 10.1.5 or later (10.2.2 recommended); 512 MB RAM (recommended for smooth transitions); 2 GB of available disk space for *iTunes*, *iPhoto*, *iMovie* and *iDVD*, 250 MB for *iTunes*, *iPhoto*, *iMovie* only; Apple SuperDrive required for IDVD; OS X 10.2 or later and a DVD burner is required to archive *iPhoto* albums to DVD

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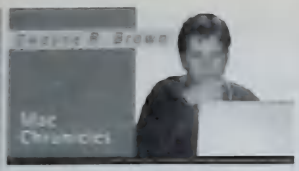

All the right curves

There's this mathematical curve called the sigmoid curve that some businesses have adopted as a way to express the desired growth of their company. In the corporate world, the sigmoid curve represents the following: "The things and the ways which got you where you are, are seldom the things to keep you there." In plain English, that means change – and change while things are going well, not when they start to go downhill. The key to the sigmoid curve is for a company to shake things up and introduce new products or new ideas while they seem to be on top. By doing this, the curve of revenue, popularity, or whatever measure you use can be perceived as always rising, reaching a plateau, then rising again. No one likes to see that curve sloping down to the right.

Someone at Apple has to be subscribing to this method of management. How else can you explain the unrelenting release of new hardware and software and the sheer desire to once again lead the way with new technologies?

While the Macintosh has never been anything less than reliable, Apple fell into a sleep during the better part of the 1990s. As the decade came to a close, one of Apple's co-founders, Steve Jobs, came back into the fold and began rebuilding. First on his agenda: Build a new operating system from the ground up. OS X has completely reinvented and revitalized the Mac. Software developers have been jumping on the Mac bandwagon faster than ever. But as the sigmoid curve suggests, don't stand still. The latest release of OS X, Jaguar, has only been around for a year and already there is word that another major update is coming. Code-named "Panther," Jobs unveiled it to developers in June. It's expected to start shipping in the fall. Panther will be the fourth major OS update in as many years. That is an example of the sigmoid curve.

But just putting a new face on an old box isn't enough – they've built a new box too. Apple's hardware is more stunning than it has ever been while still being leading edge. The new G5 processor has been announced and prices are still falling into line with what consumers are willing to pay. Before you buy a PC, see what Apple has to offer.

While Apple has maintained a firm footing in the professional graphics and audio world through the past decade, the company has renewed its interest in the home. Digital hub is a catch phrase that computer gurus like to throw around, but only Apple seems to be truly capitalizing on it. There has been a slew of software directly from Apple that tightly integrates the computer with media and peripherals attached to it. Mac is now becoming the standard of what a digital hub should be. *iLife*, the centre of the hub, includes *iTunes*, *iPhoto*, *iMovie* and *iDVD*. Each program is fully capable of integrating your digital lifestyle.

On other fronts, *iSync* is picking up steam to maintain that ever-important access to your current data anywhere and anytime across several different platforms. *Safari* and *Keynote* are proving that Mac can do it better. FireWire maintains its superiority over USB with FireWire 800 and Apple takes the lead by being the first manufacturer to support 802.11g, which is poised to become the new standard in wireless transmission. Airport Extreme is an example of that technology.

Apple has also made a serious commitment to the networking community with its Xserve line of products and newly announced Panther Server operating system. Hooking up a Mac network or adding a Mac to a PC network is now about as easy as plugging in the cables and turning the machines on. Really, there's not much more to it than that.

It's kind of ironic when you think about it. There is so much more to Apple now than there has ever been, yet the simplicity of how everything works together is astounding. The amount of engineering that goes into creating that simplicity makes staying ahead of the sigmoid curve a challenge. As soon as they think they've got it right they have to find a way to make it even better. Clearly, Apple has chosen a path that places the company on the front edge of the curve. While trying to keep up with it is hard, it sure is a fun ride. OS X was just the beginning of what could prove to be a long curve that leads Apple to a very successful future. ◆

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Of wills and lawyers

By NESTOR GULA

When my wife and I decided that it was about time to make a will, we had a bunch of options. We could go to a lawyer, use one of those kits that are advertised on television, use specially developed computer software, or write what we wanted on a piece of paper in the vain hope that if the unthinkable happens, it will hold up in court.

We chose the software, of course. Intuit claims that *WillExpert* has been "developed by will and estate lawyers from across Canada" (Excluding Quebec.) As soon as you use this software a bit, you realize that there is truth in that statement. The software package stinks of lawyers. As you fill out what is to be your will, answering simple questions, this is very evident. It felt like sitting in a lawyer's office and answering questions.

What *WillExpert* does very well is to explain each and every step in relatively plain English. You can easily click on various terms and get a full page explanation of each term, its use, and consequence. The attention to detail in *WillExpert* is very good. However, the end result for the user is that you really have to be in the mood to write a will and deal with the legal nitpicking. Just putting a simple will together became quite a task, as the software was asking so many questions about alterative beneficiaries and executors.

The end result is always the place where software should be judged. *WillExpert* scores big here, because after going through the questions and then printing our wills, my wife and I both got 13-page documents that only a lawyer and judge would go through and comprehend. ◆

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FEATURE

Technology means home is never too far

By MARA GULENS

Preparing for my family's overseas adventure, I knew I would need technology in order to work. I also anticipated it would be nice to be able to connect with friends and family back home, but I had no idea technology would play such a huge part in determining the overall success of our travels.

Let me step back a bit. Our destination was Latvia, a small country directly across the Baltic Sea from Sweden. Latvia regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and is currently emerging from post-Soviet chaos as it prepares to enter the European Union.

In other words, it's a place that's gone from zero consumer technology to fiber optic cables, updated telephone systems and complex web design in only 13 years. The perfect place to test the latest technologies, and see what it's like to connect in a foreign environment ...

Where to begin

Without the right equipment, cables and passwords, we would have been nowhere. But far more important was the Internet connection, which gave meaning to all the equipment we lugged with us.

Latvia's one and only telephone company, Lattelekom, has a Web page and fortunately we were able to read up on the various connections available and set up a time to get connected before we left Canada.

Three days after our arrival, an engineer arrived and for 30 lats ($72) installed a phone line, and for another 40 lats ($99) hooked us up to the Internet (price includes one month's usage). Surfing ain't cheap. But it turns out access to anything other than .lv during business hours is not part of the price. We had to fork out another 9 lats ($22) a month for outside-Latvia World Wide Web access during business hours.

The only terrifying moment was after the initial send and receive, which happened to coincide with the release of the Bugbear virus. For one sleepless night I imagined we had screwed up with our wireless network and that post-Soviet hackers were making their way into our system ... and any system we were connected with. Perhaps a case of jetlag. More likely too many Matrix-type movies.

Getting it right

During our six-week sojourn we were happy to discover that our anticipation of what hardware we'd need was bang on.

Notebook computer: The iBook I had on loan from Apple was perfect for overseas travel. The biggest bonus was that it was equipped with an Airport card (wireless network card in PC-speak), which meant I could move around the apartment and even do my writing in the kitchen and bedroom. This also meant we didn't have to stress about the Lattelekom guy drilling holes all over an apartment we didn't own.

The iBook had a CD burner which was perfect for backups (in case the laptop got lost or was stolen). Even better, we could make CDs of the hundreds of digital photos we took (and even give them away), and listen to new discs we acquired.

Here's the biggest plus and one worth considering. I'm a Mac user, and the iBook allowed me to stick to my platform. Not only does this mean I was comfortable with the system but it also means that once I returned home I was able to copy my entire desktop back to my G4.

Printer: Before I left Toronto, I searched around for a printer that would be "small enough to fit into a suitcase, yet powerful enough to make you feel like you're in business, even though you're thousands of miles away from home."

The HP Deskjet 450 mobile printer fit the bill, and I'm totally convinced it would be perfect for the cottage and any other roaming environment. It weighs only a few pounds, is the size of a small radio and is so easy to use that it brings you back to the days when technology was just two buttons and a plug.

But the best thing is that the Deskjet 450 is wireless and battery operated. This means that you can take it with you wherever you go and even if you don't have infrared capabilities required to print wirelessly, you're not stuck searching for power. Moreover, when you're in battery-mode, the printer is smart enough to shut down if you're not using it.

Cell phone: Before I left for Latvia, a friend wrote to tell me that I wouldn't be considered human unless I had a cell phone. How very true. People in Latvia – and as I understand it, all of Europe – live on cell phones, no matter what their income bracket and where they happen to be. In fact, many people don't even carry watches, because they rely on their mobile phones to tell time.

While text messaging is catching on in Canada, over in Latvia it's so hot you wonder how we do without it. That's in part because PC ownership is not yet as widespread and partly because text messaging is considered an aspect of modern mobility. It's just not polite to make phone calls at midnight – even if the midnight sun is still high in the sky. Another reason to text message: It's cheaper than voice.

Fido's Sony Ericsson T300 GSM world phone was my first go at anytime, anywhere, no-mess mobile connectivity. The system automatically links up to local carriers, meaning that when our plane was delayed in London I just picked up and dialed to Latvia to inform friends of a change in plans.

The next time I pulled out the phone, I was on a dirt road in central Latvia. Again the phone located the local carrier, and I did my banking in a place that has never even seen Canada Dry.

The only catch is that in some parts of the world, such as Latvia, you pay a hefty price for this service. If you're staying anywhere for a lengthy period of time, it's much cheaper to get a local phone

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and connect directly to the local carrier.

In this respect the European system also differs. In Europe, phones are separate from their numbers, meaning people swap phones and just stick to their Smart cards. I ended up borrowing my cousin's Nokia, and later upgrading to a Siemens C55. Each phone had different benefits when it came to typing, and the Nokia was by far the most intuitive.

The final cell phone bonus was a perk that will probably take a few years to perfect. After lots of communication with the local mobile phone company, my husband managed to set up a GPRS connection, which provides an always-on wireless Internet connection via the USB connected cell phone. Theoretically this allows us to beam images from anywhere to anywhere. So much for being away.

Eye to eye across the Atlantic.

I'm saving the best for last, just because these are items I could have lived without, but with which life was just so much more, well, exciting.

Thanks to our DSL connection, we were able to have video hook-ups with Canada. The first time was absolutely incredible. Midnight in Riga, 5 PM in Canada. My sister was getting ready to serve the kids dinner, we were ready to head to sleep.

While the setup took many hours to perfect, and still wasn't perfect (we often ended up with either the video or the audio and filled in the gaps with text), it nonetheless allowed us to communicate, and proved technology can bridge the gap.

In what ways and to what extent it can do so remains a question. While we know how to communicate via voice and the written word, Web-camming takes some getting used to. This was illustrated best when my six-year-old nephew made faces on the Canadian end, while my husband and father did the same thousands of kilometres away. Somehow the most primitive language seemed to work best.

The DSL connection also allowed us to upload digital images to our Web server back in Toronto, giving friends and family immediate access to our adventures.

In the age of immediacy this is more critical than we had anticipated. For one, the pictures provided the thousand words we never got around the writing. After all, who has time to repeat all those stories upon returning home?

Mara Bulers (marabulers@yahoo.com) is a Toronto writer and editor.

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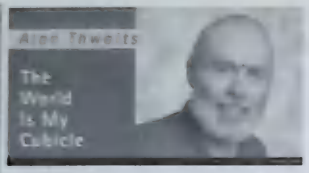

A view through the side window

Faithful readers of this column know that your correspondent spends a lot of time on his bicycle. I cycle throughout the year, in everything from urban and suburban to remotely rural settings. Oddly enough, that reliance on cycling gives me fascinating glimpses into how people are using technology.

When riding a bicycle, you're at the same level as everyone's car windows. Traffic lights and stop signs offer numerous opportunities to check out what's going on inside the world of cars. Now, I'm as civilized and private as most folks of my age and background, so I don't peer and pry into places that are none of my concern – but it's hard to ignore the obvious.

What's obvious is that people who drive cars are seldom just driving cars. You'd think that piloting a 200 horsepower, one-and-a-half ton vehicle through the complexities of city traffic would require all of its driver's attention. In fact, I think there are actually guidelines to this effect in many driver education programs.) The sad reality, though, is that car drivers are usually doing many other things in addition to driving their cars. And an awful lot of those things have to do with technology.

Consider, for instance, the radio-CD player combination, which graces the dashboards of even the most feeble econoboxes these days. I can hear some of these folks coming a kilometre or two away. But even my fellow geezers, who are more inclined to quietly tune in to soft rock, are oblivious, perhaps lost in dreams of high-school dances and lost opportunities. Hip-hop or crooner tunes, it's all the same thing – a separate world for each and every driver.

Kick things up a notch, and we're in the world of the cellphone-equipped driver. They're all over the roads these days – very often literally. Sometimes the phone's in the driver's hand, sometimes it's attached via a hands-free cable. But the driver's attention is on the phone, not on the driving that needs to be done. It's always interesting – and not a little unnerving – to see someone take off from a stop at a traffic light, and sail through a left-hand turn in the face of a stream of oncoming traffic, while djaling a number or checking the phone's screen to see who just called. Here's a heartfelt plea, folks – if you see yourself in this picture, for my sake and everyone else's, give your head a shake. You're not doing anyone any favours.

Now, we live in exciting times, so things like CD players and cellphones aren't the limit to the foolishness car drivers can get up to. I've seen folks driving along city streets while checking out their handhelds and chatting on the cellphones. What's this all about? Are they looking at a database of information about the person they're talking to? Consulting an onscreen map to see where they're headed? Or is this just an illustration of the old adage that people do whatever they can get away with, without much (or any) thought as to whether they really need to?

In-the-car DVD players? Fortunately, they're not too common yet, and they're almost always found in the rear passenger section of the car or minivan. But, while the kids are watching Elmo on the DVD, Mom and Dad are very often monitoring the wee ones' enjoyment of the movie, or – worse yet – intervening to stop the commencement of actual physical hostilities. Besides, if Mom and Dad are really tech-savvy, and are the proud owners of a really upscale road behemoth, they're going to have their own GPS-based screen on the dashboard of the car. That way, they can be distracted from the task of driving while they consult the on-screen map (and each other) about whether the charming little boite they read about recently is in the vicinity or not.

Almost everyone seems to like to pile one distraction on top on another. Go on, you can do it! Roll up the windows so you can't hear what's going on around your vehicle. Turn up the air conditioner, and crank up the tunes on your CD player. Call a friend on your cellphone, and then check out directions to the restaurant where you're going to meet on your handheld. If that isn't keeping you busy enough, put on some eyeshadow and light up a cigarette. After all, it's your world to enjoy, isn't it? Heaven forbid common sense should get in your way.

Alan Thwaits, a *TC!* Contributing Editor, is a freelance journalist who writes about computer, communications, and business technologies. He can be reached at praxis@pathcom.com. ◆

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Making *Office* feel at home in Linux

Microsoft Office rules the computer landscape. Depending on the source of information, it has been claimed that anywhere up to 95 per cent of all computer users use *Office*. But if you run other operating systems, such as Linux, you can't run a native version, since Microsoft only makes *Office* for Windows and Macintosh computers. Die hard Linux fans would insist that there is a way to perform the same tasks in a native Linux application such as *OpenOffice*, *AbiWord*, *KOffice*, *Gnumeric*, or *StarOffice*. But every once in a while someone sends you a complicated *Word* or *Excel* document and in reality, the best tool for the job is *Microsoft Office*.

There are numerous tools to let you run Windows applications under Linux, and in my opinion the best for *Office* is CodeWeaver's *CrossOver Office* (www.codeweavers.com). *CrossOver Office* allows the user to install and run certain Microsoft Windows programs without needing a Microsoft operating system licence. Based on the freely available WINE (Wine Is Not an Emulator), it has been optimized to run *Microsoft Office 97* and *2000*, as well as select non-Microsoft applications such as *Lotus Notes*, *Adobe Photoshop*, and *Intuit Quicken*.

Why try it?

At home, I use *OpenOffice.org* (see www.openoffice.org) under both Windows and Linux. For all of my basic office needs it is the perfect application. But at my office, we need to run certain Windows programs and currently we use *VMWare* under Linux. This process allows us to get our jobs done, but using *VMWare* is not very efficient in my opinion with respect to speed, memory usage and hard drive space. Plus, with *VMWare* every one of our Linux workstations requires a Windows licence. We recently acquired a 30-day demo of *CrossOver Office* to check it out. To make a long story short, I am very pleased with the way it runs *Microsoft Office* applications.

After installing *CrossOver Office*, we installed *Office 2000* on one of our Red Hat Linux machines. The process was straightforward and painless. Once complete, *Office* is fully integrated with our GNOME environment and *Word*, *Excel*, and *PowerPoint* are launched by simply clicking on the desktop icon or running the executable from the command prompt. *Word* launches in 3 seconds and appears to be as stable as running natively under Windows. Setting up our network printers took a few minutes of reading the manual, but now I can print to them all. Although I did not install other *Office* applications, CodeWeaver claims that you can run *Microsoft Outlook*, *Access*, and *Internet Explorer* too.

Other options

There are a number of ways to run Windows programs under Linux. Both *Win4Lin* and *VMWare* install an actual copy of Microsoft Windows under Linux and then run the required application through Windows. I personally have had limited success with the freeware application *WINE*, but the list of Windows applications that work without problems is fairly short and in order to run most Windows programs I had to setup *WINE* to see my actual Windows partition and directory. *CrossOver Office* does not need or use a copy of Microsoft Windows.

The philosophy question

Is running Windows applications on the Linux desktop a "good thing?j" It was often said that OS/2 could run Windows programs better than Windows itself. But if you can run Windows applications, then where is the desire for companies to produce native software for Linux? My belief is that anything that allows the user to be more productive is a good thing. There is so much about Linux that I like that I run it at both the office and home. And while in most cases I can use native Linux programs (such as *OpenOffice.org*), every once in a while I need to run a Windows program. If I can do that from my Linux desktop, it makes my life easier.

Requirements

Our test machine is a dual PIII-600 with 1 GB RAM, although CodeWeavers recommends any PC with at least a 200 MHz CPU, 20 MB of hard drive space, and a recent version of Red Hat, SuSE, Mandrake, Debian, or Caldera Linux. Price: US$54.95 for a downloaded copy.

Personal e-mail to Kevin Linfield can be sent to linfield@rocketmail.com. ♦

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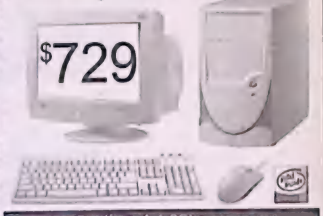

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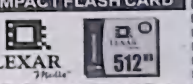

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The ol' deserted island question

We've all had this discussion at some point — you're sitting around with your friends at a pub, or perhaps on a long road trip,

and the conversation turns to music and how today's bands just don't hold a candle to the classic groups of the '70s. Gee, Justin Timberlake or Led Zeppelin? Hmm. Lemme think.

Then, someone pipes up and asks: "Hey, if you were stranded on a deserted island, what three albums would you bring?"

And so on and so forth.

But surely you'd rather bring a computer game or console game to a deserted island than any old music CD, right?

Well, we thought it would be interesting if we turned to a couple video game luminaries of our time to ask what three games they would bring to a deserted isle, and why.

First we turn to Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto, responsible for many of our most beloved electronic characters, such as Mario, Luigi, Donkey Kong, and Link from the Legend of Zelda series. His picks, and why, are as follows:

1. *Tetris* – "So that I could daily away my time..."
2. *SimCity* – "I would like to have a game with me where the main theme is for the game player to create something."
3. *Super Mario 64* – "So that I could immediately work on the next product right after I was able to return home from the island!"

Next, we hear from Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* series creator, Hideo Kojima. His response is as follows:

1. *Super Mario Brothers* – "The greatest masterpiece by Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto! I am who I am today thanks to this game; it taught me how great, fun, and deep an action game can be."
2. *Portopia Murder Case* – "An adventure game classic. This game taught me of the potential of the game medium to deliver drama and messages."
3. *Boktai* – "This is a game I am developing now, which involves the use of the sun. It is most suitable for a deserted island as you get to understand the climate and environment of a deserted island through its gameplay."

Lastly, Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin gave us his top three picks. The creator of the coveted *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak & Daxter* series offers the following:

1. *Gran Turismo 3* – "I am a car guy, and I am assuming that I would not be stranded with cars, or any usable road, so this is my fix. Also, time trial creates an endless challenge."
2. *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* – "Yeah, yeah, I know, it is the hottest current game so you think that I am just being trendy. But I can defend this choice with one word: Replayability. This game has it in spades."
3. *Half-Life* – The sand. The sun. The time. I haven't showered in three years. What's that itching? There would be some frustrations, to be sure. And nothing gets frustration out like shootin' stuff.

What are your top three favourite computer or console games of all time? Email your answer to editor@tcp.ca ◆

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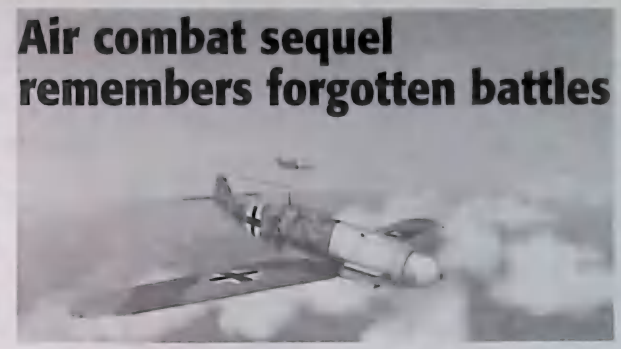
(between Warden & Kennedy)

Air combat sequel remembers forgotten battles

By NESTOR GULA



The sticker on the box says that *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles* (*IL2FB*) is a sequel to *IL2 Sturmovik* (*IL2*), but this is not really the case. *IL2FB* is basically a stand-alone expansion pack. It has everything that the original had, but more.

The graphics, which were the strength in the original are still great. Planes look very realistic and the weather effects are spectacular. The game still focuses on the air war on the Second World War's eastern front. Units in *IL2FB* come from not only Germany and the Soviet Union, but also from Hungary and Finland. This gives history and simulation buffs a whole host of aircraft to experience – ones that are rarely talked about, much less simulated. There are 30 new aircraft to fly, including some total rarities, like a Soviet jet aircraft and famous planes – the JU-87 Stuka dive-bombers – that were omitted in the original game. You also get to fly some American (P-39 Airacobras, P-47) and British (Hawker Hurricanes) aircraft that were either sold to the warring sides or supplied under the Lend Lease arrangements.

Flying these planes is a lot of fun. This is mainly because of the great graphics. If you have not experienced flying a simulation plane, *IL2FB* will be of little help. When you hit the Training menu button, you get a long list of training subjects for various planes. However, these are just little movies that explain how things are done. There is no real training – you do not get to fly the plane or interact in any way with the controls. To apply what you have seen, you have to go out and do a mission. I can see this being a bit baffling for someone new to flight simulators. I would like to see interactive lessons here – especially with such concepts as dive-bombing and aerial combat.

The Campaign system has been tweaked but is still cumbersome and tedious at times. My favourite method of playing *IL2* and *IL2FB* is the Quick Mission builder. You get to quickly hop into one of many different planes, select the opponent and you're off. This function has unfortunately not been improved. Players are still limited to the same three maps they had in the original game – this is unfortunate but not a big detraction. There are more ground targets to hit and it is a great way to learn the airplanes and experiment with techniques that the training section should have taught you.

Engaging other aircraft is difficult in this game. One of the reasons for this is because the artificial intelligence (AI) of the opposing side is so good. When they fire at you it is always straight and true and gets you pretty quickly. When I am firing back it is always shaky and with more hope than confidence. Turning down the opposing side's skill level to rookie helps a bit, but only for a minute or two. I solved this problem by making myself invincible, and giving myself unlimited ammunition and fuel. Now I'm the scourge of the skies.

Although not a significant improvement on the original, *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles* is fun and looks great. However, unless you are a real fan of air simulations, or a history buff, this version offers nothing substantially new. If you are out looking for a challenging and realistic air combat simulation you will not go wrong with *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles*. ◆

more INFO

IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles
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UbiSoft
www.il2sturmovik.com

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Profile: Choclair

Photo by Ted Kritsonis

The spotlight on stage is like a home away from home for Choclair, given that the Scarborough native has been a mainstay in Canada's burgeoning hip hop scene over the last several years.

Though it may be on the rise, Canadian hip hop has been a tough sell pretty much everywhere for quite some time. But a recent surge had a lot to do with Choclair's debut album, *Ice Cold*, doing so well domestically. Not every hip hop artist in Canada can lay claim to earning a living off their music, but Choclair – as humble as he is – does pretty well for himself.

After leaving the confines of a major label at Virgin Records, Choclair has found his way back to the grassroots by starting up his own independent label, Greenhouse Music. With his new album, *Flagrant*, released in June, Choclair is looking to shine in the spotlight once again.

Who: Choclair, hip hop artist and co-founder of Greenhouse Music.

Computer now used: I work on a Toshiba laptop.

Computer first used: It was a Gateway.

Favourite computer: Any half-decent laptop that can play *Sim City*.

Other technical gadgetry in use at this time: We use *Pro Tools* in the studio for recording, which I did my new album on. I also have a digital camera.

Do you use your computer for play? Oh hell yeah.

Best thing about the technology you have: I play video games all the time. They really help me get through the day, especially when things are hectic.

Worst thing: When my game console doesn't work. That can really piss me off and ruin my whole day.

What can't you live without? As long as I have my video games and my radio, then I'm cool.

Is there anything you think you need? A private jet would be nice.

What frustrates you the most about technology? By the time you buy something, the manufacturer will come out with a better model of what you just got. It's like they're just stringing us along.

Personal take on issues dealing with technology: With all of the new tech stuff coming out, you have to watch your privacy. Whether it's the Internet, credit cards and microchips in your finger, it's like the mark of the beast on you. You've got to watch yourself, because someone is probably watching you. ❖

– Ted Kritsonis

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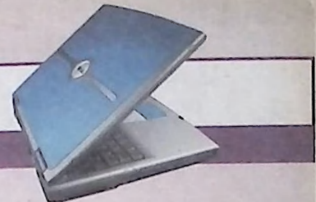

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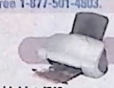

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